

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF DELAWARE

JUANITA SCOTT,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	
v.)	Civ. Action No. 13-660-GMS
)	
DIVISION FAMILY SERVICES,)	
)	
Defendant.)	

MEMORANDUM

The plaintiff, Juanita Scott (“Scott”), filed this lawsuit alleging defamation and discrimination. (D.I. 2.) She appears *pro se* and was granted permission to proceed *in forma pauperis* pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915. (D.I. 6.) The court now proceeds to review and screen the complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2).

I. BACKGROUND

Scott filed an emergency ex parte order for guardianship of two individuals. While not clear, it appears that she filed the matter in the Family Court of the State of Delaware in and for New Castle County. The matter was denied and Scott seems to state that she appealed the matter to the Supreme Court of the State of Delaware. Scott names as a defendant the Delaware Division of Family Services.

Scott alleges that she was required to take an intelligence test and, when she did not pass it, was labeled with “mild mental retardation” and found “not capable” of taking care of children without the assistance of another adult. Scott disagrees with the decision. She alleges the decision is the result of discrimination and is defamatory. Scott seeks \$40,000 for her suffering.

II. STANDARD OF REVIEW

This court must dismiss, at the earliest practicable time, certain *in forma pauperis* actions that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim, or seek monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2). The court must accept all factual allegations in a complaint as true and take them in the light most favorable to a *pro se* plaintiff. *Phillips v. County of Allegheny*, 515 F.3d 224, 229 (3d Cir. 2008); *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 93 (2007). Because Scott proceeds *pro se*, her pleading is liberally construed and her complaint, “however inartfully pleaded, must be held to less stringent standards than formal pleadings drafted by lawyers.” *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. at 94 (citations omitted).

An action is frivolous if it “lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact.” *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989). Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i), a court may dismiss a complaint as frivolous if it is “based on an indisputably meritless legal theory” or a “clearly baseless” or “fantastic or delusional” factual scenario. *Neitzke*, 490 at 327-28; *Wilson v. Rackmill*, 878 F.2d 772, 774 (3d Cir. 1989).

The legal standard for dismissing a complaint for failure to state a claim pursuant to § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) is identical to the legal standard used when ruling on 12(b)(6) motions. *Tourscher v. McCullough*, 184 F.3d 236, 240 (3d Cir. 1999) (applying Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(6) standard to dismissal for failure to state a claim under § 1915(e)(2)(B)). However, before dismissing a complaint or claims for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted pursuant to the screening provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1915, the court must grant Scott leave to amend her complaint unless amendment would be inequitable or futile. *See Grayson v. Mayview State Hosp.*, 293 F.3d 103, 114 (3d Cir. 2002).

A well-pleaded complaint must contain more than mere labels and conclusions. *See Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662 (2009); *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007). The assumption of truth is inapplicable to legal conclusions or to “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action supported by mere conclusory statements.” *Id.* at 678. When determining whether dismissal is appropriate, the court conducts a two-part analysis. *Fowler v. UPMC Shadyside*, 578 F.3d 203, 210 (3d Cir. 2009). First, the factual and legal elements of a claim are separated. *Id.* The court must accept all of the complaint’s well-pleaded facts as true, but may disregard any legal conclusions. *Id.* at 210-11. Second, the court must determine whether the facts alleged in the complaint are sufficient to show that Scott has a “plausible claim for relief.”¹ *Id.* at 211. In other words, the complaint must do more than allege Scott’s entitlement to relief; rather it must “show” such an entitlement with its facts. *Id.* “[W]here the well-pleaded facts do not permit the court to infer more than a mere possibility of misconduct, the complaint has alleged - but it has not shown - that the pleader is entitled to relief.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678 (quoting Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2)).

III. DISCUSSION

Scott checkmarked boxes on the complaint to allege discrimination by reason of race, color, and national origin. However, the conclusory allegations do not rise to the level of discrimination. Nor does the complaint speak to Scott’s race, color and/or national origin. After

¹A claim is facially plausible when its factual content allows the court to draw a reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged. *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678 (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570). The plausibility standard “asks for more than a sheer possibility that a defendant has acted unlawfully.” *Id.* “Where a complaint pleads facts that are ‘merely consistent with’ a defendant’s liability, it ‘stops short of the line between possibility and plausibility of ‘entitlement to relief.’” *Id.*

thoroughly reviewing the complaint, the court draws on its judicial experience and common sense and finds that the allegations are not plausible on their face.

Moreover, it is clear in reading the complaint that Scott's main claim is her dissatisfaction with the State Court's ruling in not granting her guardianship to two individuals. To the extent Scott seeks review and rejection of Delaware state decisions, the claims fall under the purview of the *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine and, therefore, the court cannot exercise jurisdiction.² To the extent the guardianship action remains pending in State court and has not yet reached final resolution, the court must abstain by reason of the abstention doctrine as defined in *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37 (1971), which has been extended to civil cases and state administrative proceedings. *See Middlesex Cnty. Ethics Comm. v. Garden State Bar Ass'n*, 457 U.S. 423 (1982); *Huffman v. Pursue Ltd.*, 420 U.S. 592 (1975).

Finally, because the complaint fails to state a federal claim, the court declines to exercise jurisdiction over Scott's supplemental defamation claim. 28 U.S.C. § 1367; *De Asencio v. Tyson Foods, Inc.*, 342 F.3d 301, 309 (3d Cir. 2003).

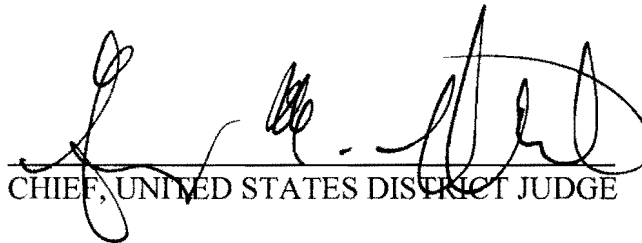
IV. CONCLUSION

The court will dismiss the complaint as frivolous pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i). In light of the nature of Scott's claims, the court finds that amendment would be futile. *See Alston*

²The *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine refers to principles set forth by the Supreme Court in *Rooker v. Fidelity Trust Co.*, 263 U.S. 413 (1923), and *District of Columbia Court of Appeals v. Feldman*, 460 U.S. 462 (1983). Because the doctrine divests the court of subject matter jurisdiction, it may be raised at any time by the court *sua sponte*. *Desi's Pizza, Inc. v. City of Wilkes-Barre*, 321 F.3d 411, 419 (3d Cir. 2003); *Nesbit v. Gears Unlimited, Inc.*, 347 F.3d 72, 77 (3d Cir. 2003).

v. Parker, 363 F.3d 229 (3d Cir. 2004); *Grayson v. Mayview State Hosp.*, 293 F.3d 103, 111 (3d Cir. 2002); *Borelli v. City of Reading*, 532 F.2d 950, 951-52 (3d Cir. 1976).

An appropriate order will be entered.


CHIEF, UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

June 27, 2013
Wilmington, Delaware